

# The RARE BEER CLUB



## JOLLY PUMPKIN ARTISAN ALES DEXTER, MICHIGAN

### WHO NEEDS AN OCCASION? (RBC EXCLUSIVE)

This month, we're proud to bring you a very special beer brewed exclusively for members of The Rare Beer Club by one of our favorite breweries, Jolly Pumpkin, and its founder and brewer, our friend Ron Jeffries. This is the latest in a number of Jolly Pumpkin exclusives that we've had the pleasure of featuring in recent years; others include Los Vivos y Los Muertos in 2014, Rosie del Barrio in 2016, L'épouvantail Noir in 2017, The Regifted in 2018, El Pastor in 2020, and Flor de los Muertos in 2021—all exceptional releases that captured our favorite aspects of this brewery. The latest exclusive is sure to intrigue—a mildly sour wild stout that spent nine months in oak barrels then further aged on blackberries and cherries.

Approaching the nondescript structure that houses the Jolly Pumpkin Artisan

Ales brewery, you might think the place looks more like a defunct paper products warehouse than a world-class brewery. But step inside and not only will you find shiny brewing equipment, you'll also encounter row upon row of wooden barrels in which beer of various ages, blends and funk-levels is maturing. The brewery performs barrel aging on all of the Jolly Pumpkin beers. The time, labor and expense required to age every ounce of beer they make in

traditional wooden barrels, is, some would say, madness. But it's what breeds their awesome array of truly distinctive beers. Well, that and open fermentation, meaning that the yeast are left to work their magic in a container that's left wide open—instead of being inside a closed stainless steel tank. This means that any wild yeast floating about in the air can get into the beer and apply a bit of their

own natural funk to the flavor of the beer. Talk about personalization—the combination of open fermentation and barrel aging is not only artisanal brewing, it's an additional element of the art of brewing that has largely disappeared from the craft. Sure, barrel aging has become increasingly popular among craft brewers and beer geeks, but as a proportion of the overall amount of beer produced in the U.S., few people are doing it, and fewer do it as well as Jolly Pumpkin. JP takes it a step further by even fermenting its beers in wood before aging them further—a risky process when it comes to consistency and quality control, but founder and brewer Ron Jeffries somehow manages to pull it off

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**JOLLY PUMPKIN**  
ARTISAN ALES

### SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Style</b>
Barrel-Aged Wild Stout with Cherry and Blackberry
<b>Alcohol By Volume</b>
8.5%
<b>Serving Temperature</b>
45–50° F
<b>Suggested Glassware</b>
Tulip, Chalice, Goblet, or Teku Glass

beautifully.

Ron has steered Jolly Pumpkin Artisan Ales since 2004, and the brewery currently operates under the Northern United Brewing Company. Visitors to Jolly Pumpkin's main brewery in Dexter, Michigan can tour the 50-barrel brewhouse that houses both Jolly Pumpkin and the non-wild-fermented beers of North Peak Brewing Co., which are also made on site (though kept well separated from Jolly Pumpkin's funky operations). For the latest info on setting up a tour, or for visiting one of the Jolly Pumpkin brewpubs in Michigan or Chicago, head over to their website at [brewery.jollypumpkin.com](http://brewery.jollypumpkin.com) for more info.

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## WHO NEEDS AN OCCASION?

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One of our two featured beers this month is a Rare Beer Club exclusive from our friends at Jolly Pumpkin: the delicious Who Needs an Occasion? This release will be available exclusively through the club and the brewery's tasting room.

This wild stout was made with an array of specialty malts and sugars to impart deep complexity as it aged in oak barrels for nine months. It was further aged on blackberries and cherries that add a slightly jammy fruitiness to the beer. Fuggle and Perle hops give the beer an inviting 37 IBUs of bitterness. The ABV reaches 8.5%, from incorporating Pilsner malt, Pale Malt, Roasted Barley, Crystal 75, Munich 10, Wheat Malt, and Black

Malt, with turbinado sugar and molasses. The outcome is a complex beer with the aromas and flavors of a stout and characteristics of an Oud Bruin.

Who Needs an Occasion? pours an opaque, deep, dark, chocolatey brown, with dark red hues towards the rim, capped by a tan head. Pronounced deeply toasted and roasted aromas rise from the glass as it's poured, with cocoa, caramel, and hints of coffee, followed by tart cherries and blackberries. As it settles, savory wild yeast aromas abound with dried herbs, toasted nuts, funky oak, and a slight balsamic concentration. Dark earth, mushroom, and leather appear in the background with hints of brown butter, and a slight jamminess from the cherries and blackberries.

Sipping this beer, one finds a mouthwatering tartness with savory, lightly sour flavors, tangy and defined dark fruit, and underlying bitterness. The liquid is somewhat concentrated and silky, with a finely bubbled mousse, and round, full bodied mouthfeel. Dark cacao bitterness with light acidity showcases the specialty malts and yeast cultures that make this beer unique. Sour cherries and tart blackberries are enveloped in warm toasty caramel, nutty brown butter, deeply roasted grain, and crushed herbs. The oak barrels used have an intrinsic ability to micro-oxygenate the beer as it ages, which adds a distinct woody tannin to the solution and deepens its maturity. The lingering finish highlights

the complexity of the fermentation and barrel maturation, and delightfully increases in complexity as it warms. The 8.5% ABV does not overpower the beer and there is no off-putting booziness that lesser beers would be plagued by. A remarkable release from Jolly Pumpkin, this one left us craving our next sip. As they say at Jolly Pumpkin, "Who Needs an Occasion? Can't we just enjoy something for the sake of enjoying it? Life is complicated enough. Have a beer!"

### AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

Who Needs an Occasion? can be drunk now and has great potential for further aging. The flavors in this beer should continue to develop and intensify as it matures and would be fine to visit from time to time over the next few years. For food pairings, we're inclined to try this with roasted dry-aged meats, cured charcuterie, and salty blue veined cheeses.

# The RARE BEER CLUB

THE BRUERY  
PLACENTIA, CALIFORNIA

## PARTRIDGE IN A PEAR TREE (2020)

What The Bruery has done for beer in Orange County, California, while impressive, is just a part of their contribution to the greater brewing landscape. Once just a confusingly named, obscure little brewery from a curiously named little Southern California town, The Bruery is now known to the majority of beer geeks across the country and beyond. They've continued to develop their extensive barrel-aging program, launched the Bruery Terreux line, opened The Tasting Room at Bruery Terreux in Anaheim, and ultimately become one of the most respected breweries in the nation. They've even recently added a third Bruery



location: The Bruery Store at Union Market in Washington, DC, establishing a wee East Coast outpost.

As a result of their unbridled creativity and skilled brewing practices, The Bruery's beers are still some of the most highly coveted out there, period. It was back in 2009 that they released the beer that took the brewing community by storm: Black Tuesday, a massive imperial stout (clocking in around 20% ABV) aged in bourbon barrels for well beyond a year. Hugely oaky, rich, velvety smooth, and borderline nourishing, it caused both a stir and an annual tradition. The demand for this stout led people to

drive and/or fly from hundreds (or even thousands) of miles away. A handful of breweries have managed to take the "limited-release" concept as far as The Bruery has done with their beers, with annual vintages that sell out in a single day. Some folks have even gone one step further, creating the release equivalent of a serial novel, as The Bruery did with its recently completed 12 Days of Christmas series of annual beers.

Speaking of which, The Rare Beer Club was proud to have the opportunity to feature every one of the 12 Days of Christmas beers—except the first. This

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### SPECIFICATIONS

**Style**  
Belgian-style Quadrupel Ale w/  
Spices

**Alcohol By Volume**  
11.3%

**Serving Temperature**  
50–57° F

**Suggested Glassware**  
Chalice, Goblet, Tulip,  
or Snifter Glass

month we're very excited to correct this issue—which has nagged our thoughts and haunted our dreams for many years now—as The Bruery has graciously offered our members an allocation of their 2020 rerelease of Partridge in a Pear Tree. And it does not disappoint.

Should you be traveling to SoCal or DC, definitely swing by one of The Bruery's locations to check out what they're currently working on. We've been following the path of this brewery basically since they first opened, and the continued energy and innovation coming from these folks is inspiring. For more information on The Bruery, visit their website at [thebruery.com](http://thebruery.com), or give them a call at (714) 996-MALT.

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### **PARTRIDGE IN A PEAR TREE (2020)**

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The Bruery's Partridge in a Pear Tree was inspired by a certain red wine poached pear dessert known as Poire à la Beaujolaise, and this Belgian-influenced quadrupel ale features familiar notes of dark sugar, caramel, and spices. We've featured every beer in The Bruery's 12 Days of Christmas series ever since their 2 Turtle Doves back in 2009—but we somehow missed the very first (exceptionally limited!) release in the series: Partridge in a Pear Tree. This quad was delicious and got the series off to a very well-received start, and we're excited to be

able to offer this 2020 rerelease of The Bruery's incredible Belgian-style quad brewed with spices. Definitely ideal for sharing.

Partridge in a Pear Tree pours a cola-brown color with golden highlights, capped by light-tan foam that manages to persist for a bit despite the potent ABV. Modest head formation given the alcohol, but with nice lacing around the edges. Loads of brown sugar and caramels in the aromatics, alongside some expressive Belgian-style yeast character including cloves and white pepper, which melds seamlessly to the spice additions. We found a beautifully dense Belgian-style quad here, packed with loads of toffee, caramelization, and smooth spices throughout.

This 11%+ ABV quad from The Bruery offers up a full-bodied mouthfeel with some nicely integrated carbonation. We found tons of malt-focused depth present that never feels overly heavy, and the spice along with the clove and pepper of the Belgian yeast character keep this feeling super approachable and reasonably balanced throughout. Its core caramelization and rich specialty malt additions very much satisfy on the Belgian-style quadrupel expectations, and the delicate spice additions make this extra-perfect as a holiday beer. Definitely inspired by spiced Belgian holiday ales, this American take does a beautiful job of following through on the generosity of those seasonal

releases. This is exceptionally handled throughout, with a long-lasting finish of caramelization, toffee, subtle clove-focused spice, and touches of white pepper. Pretty easy to see how The Bruery's 12 Days of Christmas series found its footing early on—this is a delicious first release that set the stage for everything that followed.

#### **AGING & PAIRING NOTES:**

The original release of Partridge in a Pear Tree was intended to potentially be consumed in a full lineup of the 12 Days of Christmas beers (the final of which wasn't released for another decade-plus!), such that we'd expect this quad to age gracefully going forward. For pairings, this should work beautifully alongside a wide variety of holiday-minded foods: spiced cake, roast turkey, cranberries and stuffing, and all sorts of poached-pear or vanilla desserts.